

away from the sticky and moist soil. Here a small stone hut without a roof had been set up, probably by herdsmen; we had seen a similar one at the well of Tallhe; they are high enough to afford some shelter against storms and snow. Wind-worn stones lay plentifully scattered about the mound, telling of all the winds which in the course of time had swept over the desert. Shrubs grew in a valley below the camp, and yielded forage for the camels and fuel for ourselves.

At Mulkabad the following rocks occur: breccia, calcareous slates, reddish-grey and reddish-brown plagioclase porphyrite, dark sandy crystalline limestone, and compact grey limestone with traces of fossils.

At half-past twelve o'clock fine thick snow began to fall, and the mist lay heavy over the camp. The temperature was a little above freezing-point, and the snow melted when it reached the ground. My tent became so wet that drops fell through in several places. The fog, snow, and heavy clouds made the day dull and gloomy, and it was vain to look for the slightest gleam which might foretell the coming out of the sun—two hours' sunshine would have sufficed to dry our tents and belongings. Nothing living is seen in this God-forgotten waste, where we are monarchs of all we survey.

The ketkhoda, Hassan, had now fulfilled all his obligations, and was to return to Kerim Khan. He received his pay, besides a liberal gratuity, and a testimonial of excellent and conscientious service. Before he went he indicated the direction we must take the next day, and pointed east-north-east, where we should find Kuh-i-nakshir. He did not know the country farther east, and therefore we were left to our own resources and the Russian and English maps I had obtained from my friends in Teheran. My chief desire was to see as much as possible of the great salt desert, the Kevir, but I was not yet quite clear whether we ought to keep to the north or the south of this great depression. If we went to the north to reach Tebbes, we should be obliged to traverse it, while if we travelled to the south of this zone we should certainly execute a very valuable survey of its southern boundary,